Back to Xenosaga

Xenosaga II to III: A Missing Year

~Sealed Fragments of Truth in the U.M.N.~

(Novel Version)

This is a fan translation of the novel version featured in *Xenosaga III Complete Guide*.
The novel version is chronological and from Jin's perspective.
A few scenes and dialogue also appear slightly different from the flash movie version.

Prologue

In downtown at night--Two shadows are walking down the street of the city where not a soul could be seen after a Gnosis attack. After all the unimaginable devastation, they arrived at the city.

"What's the status?"

The smaller shadow readily answered the question asked by the man in a coat.

"Just like the last time and the time before that, it seemed to show up within a 0.85-km radius of the residential areas. Bigger ones seemed to concentrate to this downtown area."

It was a voice of a little girl. But, the information that she provided proves that she had finished collecting and analyzing the enormous amount of information in a short period of time. The man mumbled as he continued walking.

"They seem to be looking for something---"

"The enemy has started to move. They seem to have noticed us. There's an abnormality in the gravity deviation of the surrounding area. A space-time interference has occurred. Their numbers can't be measured!"

The man finally stopped walking. He surveys his surroundings like his regular self without getting tensed up.

"--Start the countdown."

"Yes, Chief."

As she responded to the man's command, she removed the hood from her head, exposing her face in a downpour. She glares at the strange objects with her golden eyes.

"5, 4, 3, 2, 1-- Hilbert Effect has been projected!"

Waves had been unleashed from the girl's body. Rather, the figure that looked like the girl was only a camouflage. The Hilbert Effect is a 100-Series observation device developed by the late Joachim Mizrahi as well as a special ability possessed by its production model, the 100-Series Realians. A group of Gnosis bound by the ability of the 100-Series appeared before the two as they transformed into entities that exist in the domain of real numbers. Once they're in this state, it's possible to physically attack them since they're now entities that exist in the world that goes by the same laws of physics. The man drew his sword from the scabbard.

"Do you think you can follow my lead?"

"Yes!"

"Good answer."

As he smiled at the 100-Series, the man went cutting his way into the group of Gnosis. It's believed that there are less than five people who can match the power of a Gnosis using only a katana in all the thousands of light years of Federation territory. One such swordsman is an ex-serviceman and the current shopkeeper of an antiquarian bookshop, Jin Uzuki.

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A few days after Gorasas, the second biggest city on planet Felcea had been destroyed, Jin visited the Contact Subcommittee laboratory after returning to the capital planet (Fifth Jerusalem).

"--- I'm sorry about the 100-Series. But, you don't need to feel responsible for it, Jin."

This first word that came out of Dr. Juli Mizrahi's mouth as she saw Jin wasn't a comment on the report that had been submitted a few days before, but was towards Jin's unexpressed remorse.

"No, it's all my fault. I never should've done that---."

Half a year had gone by since the collapse of planet Miltia in T.C. 4767--. Major cities of many planets that belonged to the Galaxy Federation were under the attack from groups of Gnosis. Gnosis had appeared many times in the past, but there was a clear difference between those past incidents and this series of attacks. In each case, the Gnosis only targeted residential areas, and disappeared after a certain amount of time. There was a person who suspected an artificial intervention involved in this incident that was later called Gnosis Terrorism. It was Dr. Juli Mizrahi from the Contact Subcommittee. The doctor made a request to investigate the incident to Jin Uzuki whom she once gained an acquaintance with on Miltia fourteen years ago, and was reunited with in recent years. Juli supplied Jin with the data on the past attacks along with the person in charge of analyzing that data. It was the 100-Series Observational Realian. After predicting the next target based on the result of the analysis, Jin and the 100-Series decided to go down to Gorasas city. But, their unidentified enemies were a little bit ahead of them. With assistance from the 100-Series, Jin cleaned up the group of Gnosis that had destroyed Gorasas. As a result, the one behind all of this finally appeared before them. A young boy who referred to himself as Goetia transformed the 100-Series Realian into a Gnosis without changing its consciousness as a Realian.

Jin fought Goetia to change the 100-Series Realian back, but it was an impossible attempt after all; Jin had no choice but to defeat both Goetia and the 100-Series Realian. Jin obtained two pieces of information. One was that Goetia was working under the person named "Grimoire" and the other one was their purpose was to find someone.

"It's probably safe to say the person named Grimoire is deeply involved in this series of attacks."

As Juli heard Jin mumble, she closed her eyes as if to reach back in her mind.

"Does it ring a bell?"

"No—It can't be. But, that girl also knew Grimoire, didn't she?"

The information wasn't the only thing that Jin acquired in Gorasas. He was also protecting a girl who knew who Grimoire was. It was after Jin had defeated the transformed 100-Series Realian and Goetia when he found the girl. As Jin followed a small light that was blown out of the collapsed Goetia with his eyes, he found the girl who was shaking in fear behind the rubble.

"Who are you---?"

Jin put up a smile on his face so as not to scare the girl who had blond hair and dark purple eyes. But, his action didn't help at all. Jin wasn't aware that his appearance itself was the one that brought primitive fear on her.

"Don't come near me—H-help, Grimoire—"

"Grimoire? Are you--?"

It was just then when the ground near Jin's foot suddenly popped. There was a woman looking down at Jin and the girl.

"Hand that girl over to me."

The woman slightly tilted the gun with which she had shot Jin underfoot earlier. Jin quickly realized the gun was now pointed at his heart.

"I won't miss it this time."

"You're quite feisty. You don't look like this girl's guardian, either."

"It's Doctus—Do you want to remember my name? – Medio tutissimus ibis."

The woman who referred to herself as Doctus mumbled something in Latin. Jin quickly traced it back through the old dictionary he used to read all the time.

(If you want to live, you should follow the middle course-- I see. I guess she's kindly offering me a piece of advice.)

But, as much as he was reluctant do so, he had no choice but to respond to her kindness with animosity. Jin grabbed the hilt firmly without even trying to hide it.

"The girl of Grimore... She's something beyond your powers."

"--I see. It's more than enough a reason for me to face this mortal danger."

She added slightly more power to her fingers on the trigger.

"That aloofness gets on my nerves. Fine. I'll let you go for now. –Vive memor mortis."

After she said so, she disappeared without leaving a trace just like when she had showed up in front of him.

(Live on, but don't forget death is always near you.)

Jin shrugged his shoulders to her last message in his mind. He tried to talk to the girl again, who was watching the whole scene between him and the woman.

"The girl of Grimoire, huh? You are—"

The little girl quickly shook her head.

"N-No---I'm Nephilim."

"Nephilim!?"

--As Jin was reminiscing about when he rescued Nephilim, he reached one deduction.

(The purpose of the Gnosis terrorism was to find someone. If its target was this girl, the next target would have to be--)

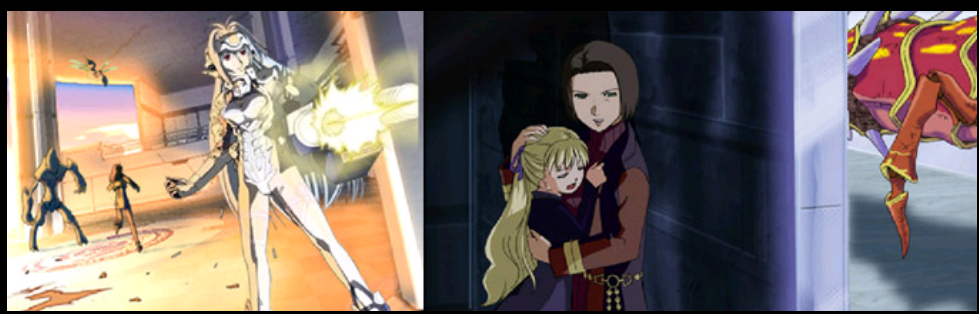
2

The entire laboratory shook due to the impact. The distinctive sound of something in motion, which sounded like as if its tone was changed due to the Doppler effect, came from somewhere immediately after. Jin was familiar with the sound.

"Is it--- the E.S. Dinah!?"

Countless numbers of weapon categories exist in the Galaxy Federation. Among those categories, there's one absolute category that no other categories can match over any evaluation criteria. That was the E.S.

Jin used three E.S.s with his associates half a year ago. The familiar operating sound was undoubtedly of the Dinah that his sister, Shion used to operate before. As Jin suspected, the laboratory was the new target of Gnosis terrorism. But, the hopeless situation where he was surrounded by numerous Gnosis completely changed all of a sudden. KOS-MOS who was on the Dinah with Shion unleashed the Hilbert Effect. A human-type anti-Gnosis system went breaking into the laboratory from the rooftop.



In the meantime, Jin gave an effective blow to the enemies that were fixated and almost all of the Gnosis were wiped out of the laboratory. After leaving Juli and the little girl to Shion and KOS-MOS who had joined him, Jin headed out to save the other staff members. Since the mission on Old Miltia, Jin put an absolute faith in his sister and that android, which will later turn out to be a huge mistake.

---When Jin finally returned, the little girl was no longer there. Shion was unconscious lying on the ground and KOS-MOS was seriously damaged. It was all done by an invader-- a female invader. Thanks to the unharmed Juli's description, one possible suspect came to Jin's mind.

(I believe that woman with the sun glasses was named Doctus--- I see. She was seeking her chance.)

Then, Shion finally woke up.

"—Are you alright, Shion!?"

"Jin, I---!"

As Shion tried to ask Jin something in deteriorating consciousness, her glance suddenly locked. With the information she received through her eyes, it took more than ten times longer than it normally would for her to grasp the situation.

"Noooo! KOS-MOS!"

There was a battered and broken KOS-MOS lying on the ground. Juli leaning on the wall with a tired look on her face explained the situation as she watched Shion and Jin attentively.

"What happened to KOS-MOS was more of an interruption than a total crash. She must be really familiar with the structure of a cyborg body."

From Juli's point of view, Doctus wasn't necessarily superior to KOS-MOS in terms of combat abilities. But, she seemed to know a whole lot about an android's body. She must've accurately detected the weakness in the structure of such an ancient relic. Shion touched the immobile KOS-MOS with her trembling hand. (It's okay. KOS-MOS isn't "dead" yet.)

Jin was relieved to see Shion keep her sanity. Jin then confirmed another concern with Juli.

"Juli, that girl is..."

"Yes, she was taken away. I'm so sorry. I couldn't do anything..."

"No, I'm just relieved that you and Shion are safe."

They were his earnest words. Regardless of that woman's true identity, she wasn't like an evil beast thirsting for blood. If that's the case, it's less likely that she will immediately put the abducted girl in a dangerous situation.

"Can you stand up, Shion?"

"---Jin"

"If you can, I need your help. It's still too early to give up. There're still some things we can do about it."

Shion firmly nodded to Jin's words.

3

Each part of KOS-MOS was collected by the Vector Industries main office. Vector's orders for Shion were to return to the company immediately, but she took vacation just to stay in the laboratory.

Shion asked Jin again about the girl who had been taken away.

"Did that girl really refer to herself as Nephilim?"

"Yes, though she didn't quite look like what you had described to me..."

The illusional girl that appeared in front of Shion several times, Nephilim. She was in white clothes, and had chestnut-colored hair and blue eyes. The analysis at the laboratory proved the girl of Grimoire was actually a Realian. Originally, Realians have gold eyes. The moment Jin saw her dark-purple eyes, the possibility of her being a Realian never crossed Jin's mind. As Juli explained it was a disguise that is only possible with advanced technology, she pointed to the monitor.

"---Here. I visualized her brain waves."

"It looks nothing like normal waves, but it looks awfully similar to the one next to it."

"Those waves are a literary fragment of Lemegeton. It's a fragment of a certain program. It's got an effect that stimulates the appearance of Gnosis by interfering with it."

Jin and Shion were surprised at Juli's unexpected news.

"Are you saying that that girl is behind this series of incidents? You couldn't obtain any information from her data?"

"Unfortunately, all of her memories -- her data from the past were all purposefully destroyed."

"No memories--- Then, what made her identify herself as Nephilim?"

"That information is relatively new. It must be an input from a third person."

"I see, so it's safe to say that the third person implemented some kind of a dangerous program into her."

"This program was developed during the Lost Jerusalem era. But, because of the strife fourteen years ago, it shattered into several pieces, and disappeared somewhere in the U.M.N. It was developed by Grimoire Verum."

The connection between the name Grimoire and the series of attacks has been revealed just like that. But, it was a possibility that they were reluctant to accept.

"--I told you it's impossible. No human lives for thousands of years."

"But, we have a clue to find her now, don't we?"

Shion was right. The waves of the program remained in the pseudo-brain, the literary fragment of Lemegeton isn't something that can be detected in humans or Realians. Goetia and the woman with sunglasses must've been following its steps as well. Juli easily pointed out the location of the girl from the wave pattern of Lemegeton. But, what was difficult was to actually pursue her.

"This isn't good---"

The positional information of the girl was ascending in the upper stratum of the atmosphere of the capital planet. Even with the authority of the subcommittee, there won't be enough time to stop her from leaving the surface of the planet. Once she's out in outer space, it'd be extremely difficult to pursue her.

"If we had Dinah---"

Dinah was taken away by Vector along with KOS-MOS.

"I guess we have no choice. An E.S. isn't something that staff that's currently out of work can casually use."

Shion gave a strained smile to Jin's words. She must've remembered what happened in the past.

"Jin, I'm aware you're busy, but I have a new assignment for you."

Juli who's been listening to the conversation between Shion and Jin interrupted with a mischievous look on her face.

"An aircraft rented from Vector for research purposes is stored in the second hanger. I've always wanted to ask you to be a test pilot for it."

"Hm, then that aircraft should be equipped with a Vessel of Anima, correct?"

"That's correct. The name of the craft is Reuben. It's already been adjusted to fit you."

"I'm pleased to accept your assignment."

"Ah Jin, Juli, are you two sure about this? It's equipped with a Vessel of Anima, so the aircraft is an E.S., isn't it?"

Juli nodded without hesitation.

"I'm fine. But, since it's a prototype for research purposes, it's not equipped with firearms. As long as Jin's fine with it..."

"No, I have nothing against it. I'll make sure to bring back the aircraft and the operation data as a test pilot."

While different thoughts were crossing the minds of each individual, their goal was the same. Jin and Shion quickly inspected the aircraft, and entered the cockpit.

"Jin, did you look at the elements of this aircraft? This armor, it's like a piece of paper."

"But, the mobility is incomparable. It surpasses both Dinah and Asher. I like it."

"Good luck, Jin. Without firearms, there's nothing to do for a gunner."

"Please keep a close eye on the sensor that Dr. Mizrahi set up for us. I'm counting on your navigation skills, Shion. We're taking off now!"

4

(How strange... This aircraft, no, this Vessel of Anima feels like it suits me very well...)

The moment Jin captured the target under the radar after crossing two continents, he was close enough to spot the target with the naked eye. Jin and Shion looked at the beautiful battle ship shining brightly.

"I can't believe they brought out a warship of this class."

"In order to navigate within the atmosphere of the capital planet so openly like this, they must've either forged the license, or maybe they do have the authority to legally obtain a ship like that."

As he mumbled, Jin was looking for an opening to break in by scanning the surface of the warship. At the same time, an anti-aircraft attack from the warship began. It was unlikely that the spot attack from the laser gun hit the E.S., but the armor was as thin as a piece of paper like Shion had pointed out earlier. As Jin carefully observed the course of the bullets, he found a hatch at the bottom of the warship.

"We're going in."

"Jin, don't push it too much—"

"I'll try not to---!"

Judging from Reuben's maneuvering, it was an obvious lie. The momentum that exceeded the limit of the inertial control beat on Shion as if to tear her apart. The moment that Shion almost lost consciousness, the hatch of the warship was blown off with a thunderous roar and she was finally released from the agony.

"Shion, can you stand up?"

As Jin stood up inside the cockpit of Reuben in parking position, he offered his hand to Shion. She slightly and yet firmly nodded, and grabbed Jin's hand to stand up.

(You haven't changed a bit---.)

For Jin, Shion had always been a fragile little sister that he needed to protect. But, Shion often breaks free of Jin's hands to fight for people who are even weaker than herself.

(I probably should become strong enough to believe in you---)

Keeping his inner thoughts to himself, he led Shion to break deep into the warship. There was no way that those two weren't detected by then, but the enemies kept their silence. The moment Jin opened the door after having opened numerous doors, he let out a sigh of surprise. What he saw there was a study furnished with sedate furniture and a countless number of books in bookshelves attached to the walls. Besides his own store, it was the largest archive he'd ever seen. The smell of antique papers that are different from an ion smell of the data bank was pretty pleasant to the nose.

"Hm, this room looks like a reference room. Interesting. The owner of this warship and I seem to share common tastes, but---"

Jin was contentedly surveying his surroundings for a little while, and then he casually bent backwards. The next moment, a beam of light was shot through the space where Jin's head was just a moment ago.

"---I don't approve of a surprise attack. Why don't you hand over the girl."

"Heheheh, I'm afraid that's not happening."

There was a voice from the empty space. No, it was not an empty space as a matter of fact. No matter what kind of optics camouflage is used, no one can conceal one's presence. That space was filled with the presence of Doctus and the soldiers led by her. The soldiers who had removed the camouflage were already halfway to surrounding Jin and Shion. A senior officer stepped out of the crowd of the soldiers. From the shoulder strap on his shoulder, it's clear that this officer was the captain of the warship.

"Welcome. ---We're Scientia. I'm sure you've heard the name before."

Like the captain said, Jin had actually heard the organization name, Scientia, in the past.

"It's the organization that advocates an anti-U.M.N., isn't it? What are you going to do with the girl?"

"She's deeply involved with Lemegeton."

"Her being involved in the program doesn't seem reasonable enough to kill her."

"Lemegeton isn't just an ordinary program. When taken into a brain, that individual would be contaminated, and turn into a Gnosis with his/her consciousness sustained as it is."

"Are you saying one will turn into a Gnosis with his/her consciousness as a human intact---?"

"We call them "Grandhi". That girl is one of them. Her body was given to a hospital for a certain medical research 14 years ago."

"14 years ago--- on Old Miltia?"

"The U-DO System developed by Joachim Mizrahi to control the Original Zohar--- Its original foundation structure came from the Gnosis summoning program called Lemegeton. The girl of Grimoire was used for that research."

While listening to the captain, something was stimulating Shion's memory. But, Shion didn't know what that obscure sensation meant then.

"If what you just told us is really true, it was 14 years ago when she was contaminated. Why did she show herself now?"

"—It's Vector."

Whether she knew Shion's position or not, Doctus answered mockingly.

"It's the strangest thing. Lemegeton was originally managed by Vector. It's a fact that a part of Joachim Mizrahi's research expenses were contributed by Vector. Even the U.M.N. where Grimoire is currently burrowing himself was created by Vector and they do regular maintenance on it. There's no way that Vector isn't aware of all this."

"But, it's only your speculation, isn't it?"

"It is. I don't know Vector's true intention, or have proof for it. But, that enterprise is trying to conceal the risk of the U.M.N. despite that they know how dangerous it is because they want to utilize it for something else."

Despite this harsh blame on the organization she belonged to, Shion wasn't able to object to her accusation. That was nothing but an indication that a small suspicion and distrust against Vector was already growing inside her due to the mysterious phenomenon that she had experienced in the past.

"We're going to unveil the identity of Grimoire. If it goes well, we'd be able to obtain proof of Vector's involvement with it as well. Well, please feel free to have a tour of this place."

5

Jin and Shion were taken to the bridge at gunpoint. On the way there, Jin whispered to Shion, taking advantage of the noise of the elevator.

"Shion, about what she just told us---"

"It hasn't been verified that Vector was really involved in it. I'll just do whatever I can at this point."

"--Is that right."

Jin stares at Shion with satisfaction. Jin was happy to see how much his little sister had grown.

Before long, the two were forced to stand at the corner as they arrived at the bridge. The capsule placed at the center can be seen very well from there. The silhouette floating inside the translucent capsule must be the girl of Grimoire.

"A U.M.N. bypass to the pseudo brain has been just created---"

An operator controlling the extremities connected to the capsule reported.

"Now, let's see which one will bite at the bait. Is it the mermaid of Saint Maria or Jenny Haniver? ---Either way, it would be far from normal."

As he heard the captain, Jin smiled in spite of being captured because his remark seemed appropriately witty for a person who owned that study.

"The value of the synapse has been stabilized. A compulsory dive has begun."

"The frequency of the brainwaves has been stabilized at the normal level. Tracing on the monitor has begun."

"The frequency of the brainwaves has increased. The structure percentage of the network mapping is currently at 63%---"

The experiment of Scientia seemed to be going smoothly, but---

Scream

The girl who had appeared to be unconscious suddenly screamed frantically as her entire body stiffened. Nobody knew what caused this reaction on her at that time. The girl was actually recognizing the interference to her pseudo brain as a vicarious experience of the pain she went through 14 years ago.

"No!!! Nooooo!!!"

"Crap! This isn't good. We have to calm her hysteria."

Doctus quickly ran up to the operator, but there was no way to calm the girl's hysteria.

In fact there was a person with an appearance that terrified the girl at the bridge.

(Is this girl---frightened by me?)

Jin noticed that she was staring straight at him.

"Nooo! Please don't come near me! Noooo!"

"What the hell is happening?! Each of you report back to me now!"

"There has been an outside compulsory interference to the system. The infection route is... can't be identified!"

"An abnormal response has been detected within the Encephalon. Destruction of the field has begun!"

The girl was crying as she was counterattacking with a counter dive.

"I'm sorry---I'm sorry. I just want the literary fragments. Without them--- I can't get memories."

"What a load of crap---Who do you think you are? You don't have memories in the first place!"

"---No, that's not true. I just don't remember them now--- I can get them back if I have the literary fragments."

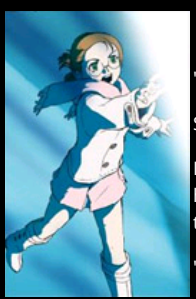
"Can't you see you're deceived!?"

"N-no---. That's a lie---!"

Then, Jin interrupted the two.

"Stop! You'd better not provoke her anymore!"

But, Jin's action only drove the girl into the corner. The girl's eyes shined in gold. She was released from the seal put on her.



"Wait, I'm coming!"

Shion ran up to the girl to release her from the agony.

But, the girl completely controlled by fear quickly disappeared into the empty sky. As that happened, Shion lost consciousness, and slowly fell to the ground. Jin realized it. The girl took Shion's soul with her. To where? ---There was no way for Jin to figure that out then.

"Shioooon!!"

Jin's scream kept resounding through the place.

6

"Jin--- I'm sorry, but I don't think we can revive her---."

"There still should be chance left if it's even a little."

"Yes, but we need to prepare for the worst-case scenario---. We need to get ourselves mentally ready."

"What do we need to prepare ourselves for!? If I don't believe she's safe---, it'd be a betrayal against her all over again."

"---I'm sorry. You're right. You should believe in it."

The guest room in the laboratory of the Contact Subcommittee. He was recalling the conversation with Juli during the day under the dim night-light in the room.

At the bridge of the Scientia warship, Jin threw away his inhibitions, and held Shion tight.

But, it did not bring back Shion. After escaping from the warship in the E.S., Jin kept calling Shion's name during the entire return flight. Even after a week, Shion kept sleeping in the treatment facility attached to the laboratory.

(I never should have dragged Shion into this---.)

His regret grew into an invisible blade as it tore Jin's heart out. Then, Jin realized that he was not in the guest room, but in a strange building. It was an adoring building that looked like a church of an ancient religion. He certainly didn't remember moving at all.

(I wonder where I wandered off to---)

Jin surveyed his surroundings to find an answer for his question, and the answer was given to him at that very moment. A voice of a girl echoed with the sound of a bell.

"This place is the world of memories that was sealed by Ars Nova and Vector---"

As Jin turned to the direction where he heard the voice from, he saw a strange girl in white clothes standing in front of him. But, the girl's appearance matches the information that exists in Jin's memory. Her long chestnut-colored hair and her light blue eyes.

"Nephilim---?"

Nephilim nodded. She isn't the girl of Grimoire.

Nephilim who often had appeared in front of Shion was now in front of Jin.

"This place is filled with remnants of abominable memories and grief. All the spirits and souls will gather in this place soon. She as well as Grimoire and them are all here---"

"She--- Shion!?"

"Yes. She's held captive at this place."

"Just tell me. What should I do---?"

As he was caught in maddening hope, Jin asked Nephilim. The hope that had finally arrived at the end of the prolonged despair was burning Jin's heart.

"When a person is trying to achieve something, that person won't necessarily be happy after it's accomplished. The stronger their desire is, the more likely they will make others unhappy. He hasn't realized it yet. Jin, please stop Grimoire---"

Nephilim murmured with eyes filled with deep sorrow.

7

"---Nephilim told you that?"

"Yeah, she said she was held captive with the girl at a place called Ars Nova that was sealed by Vector---"

Next morning, Jin reported the phenomenon he had experienced and the information he had gained to Juli.

"Are you going to go rescue the two? Have you gone mad? That center area managed by Vector isn't the kind of place even the government can casually deal with."

"I see that you're not willing to lend me your hand for this—"

"Are you aware that it could cost you your life?"

"I am aware of that. I'm not going to drag you into this, either."

Jin quietly smiled. Juli holds a responsibility as a member of the Contact Subcommittee. She's in a completely different position from a mere recluse like me. While he asked her to give him a hand for it, Jin didn't reveal everything to her. Jin had borrowed one memory plate from the analysis room of the laboratory earlier. It had a part of the dangerous program recorded on it.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to borrow the E.S. and this literary fragment for a little while."

Juli didn't answer because she wasn't quite able to make up her mind on the stance she should take. But, she already knew that she couldn't stop him from doing what he set his mind to. She was also very grateful to both Jin and Shion for reuniting her and her second daughter.

(Even if it might end up killing Jin---)

As Juli heard the E.S. leave the laboratory, tears started forming in her eyes.

Meanwhile, Jin had predicted the Contact Subcommittee wouldn't lend him a hand from the beginning. In fact, he already had another potential cooperator in mind.

(Well, it's more like an accomplice in this case---)

As Jin sent Reuben to the location detected by the sensor, a long-absent smile was brought up on his face.

"What are you up to? Are you here to kill us all?"

"As you can see, I'm unarmed."

Jin raised both of his hands in front of the potential accomplice. Last time Jin broke in the place, he had collected a bunch of the warship data like sound crest of the generator.

Thanks to Jin's old habit that he had acquired while in the special-ops forces, Jin was able to get reunited with Doctus.

"Let's make a deal. I know the whereabouts of Grimoire, and have a reason to go there. I'm going to need your assistance for it. After everything is taken care of, I'll hand over Grimoire and the literary fragment to you."

"--That sounds a little too good to be true."

"All you need to do is to prepare a dive. I don't think it's a bad deal for you."

"Heheheh--- You know, your life will be in our hands during the dive. Do you trust us enough to do that?"

"I have no choice but to trust you. There's no other way."

"What if we don't accept your offer?"

"That would put me in trouble. I certainly didn't take such a possibility into consideration."

Jin didn't even try to hide that he was upset. That face alone was enough to prove that Jin wasn't going to manipulate the negotiation.

"Seriously, that aloof attitude of yours--- I gotta say I'm appalled by it more than I am enraged by it."

"Fine. It's a deal. But, you're going to need to do whatever it takes to deliver what you offered to do."

Jin immediately revealed the information he had gained from Nephilim to Doctus.

"I didn't expect to hear the name Ars Nova here--- That certainly indicates Vector's involvement in it."

Ars Nova--- It's a division with the most security in the U.M.N. It's located at the deepest level of "S-Division" managed by Vector.

"Listen. We'll directly impose an interference on the U.M.N. to create a diversion for you."

Doctus gave directions to Jin as he sat down in the dive seat.

"Now, all you need to do is to go to Ars Nova."

"Understood. What's the coordinates of Ars Nova?"

"If the girl of Grimoire is there, the literary fragment will react to it, giving you directions to the destination. Of course, since the area is specially managed by Vector, they'll try to squash you with all their might. It'll be all up to you if you can survive their attack."

"I'll try my best to meet your expectations."

In spited of his remark, Jin had one little concern in rescuing Shion and the girl.

(My concern is that the girl is frightened by me---)

There was clearly fear in the girl's eyes as she was staring at Jin at the bridge. The same expression as the one I saw when we had first met back in Gorasas ---.

(Was the girl trying to run away from me? If that's the case, she might not want to be rescued by me---)

With a shade of hesitation, Jin dove into the Encephalon.

8

"Welcome to our sanctuary."

What was waiting for Jin as he arrived at Ars Nova after broke through the macrophage defense shield was an old man with a mustache.

Grimoire stared at Jin with eyes filled with intelligence.

"Jin Uzuki, former captain of the Galaxy Federation's Special Forces Intelligence Division. After closing the antique book store on Second Miltia, you're currently involved in an investigation requested by the Contact Subcommittee--- you have quite an interesting background."

"It was you who started the whole Gnosis attack incident, wasn't it?"

"I'm not trying to cause a trouble. You see, if you hadn't got in my way, we wouldn't have to fight at all in the first place. The literary fragment was originally mine. I just want it back. That's all."

"I'm gonna need you to hand over my sister to me first."

"Fine. It was an accident that your sister was pulled in here. It wasn't what I intended."

Grimoire must've changed the address of the Encephalon. Shion appeared in front of Jin.

"Jin--!"

"Shion--- I'm glad you're safe---"

Jin briefly explained to Shion why and how he got there.

"---Are you're saying the special technology promotion division is---? Vector is---?"

As she realized she was standing in the area that was managed by Vector's technology division, Shion seemed pretty surprised by it, but it didn't petrify her as much as before.

"I'm thankful for you two. Thanks to you two, she was able to come to her senses."

There was no sign of the girl next to Grimoire as he said it. As Jin was carefully watching out for any sign of her presence, he answered.

"I haven't completed my duty yet."

"Hehehe, I'm impressed how you can put on a brave front in a situation like this. Fine. I guess I'm going to make you a witness for a miracle that's about to happen."

"Miracle?"

"You seem to think this is just a center of confidential information here, but--- you're mistaken. Big time."

"It's a cage specially made by Vector for us. A mental jail, is that what you're trying to say?"

Grimoire smiled. It wasn't brought on from his friendliness, but rather from mockery.

"Heheheh, a jail? That's the misunderstanding I'm talking about. As I told you, this is a sanctuary for me. It's got everything I am here!"

"! Do you---stay here by your own will!?"

"Uzuki---Uzuki, please hand over the literary fragment---"

The girl that Jin has been looking for was standing behind him. The surge of her energy detained him. Then, her tiny hand reached for the memory plate held in Jin's hand.

"Ugh!"

As the girl took away the memory plate, she held it at chest height. Then, the literary fragment went pouring into the girl. Grimoire's laughter was now a roar.

"Hahahahahaha! Now, come over here. Everything's going to be in our hands!"

But, the girl who had taken in the literary fragment slumped over on the spot. She was confused.

The influx of the memories of her past. Those are the memories from the good old days she spent with her father Grimoire on the mother planet of mankind thousands of years ago.

"Argh----Ugh--- What's this? This is—me? They're all my memories? No, no---"

But, she was aware of it. No, it's rather she had no choice but to realize it. The girl who was referred to as Nephilim in those memories wasn't herself! As Jin and Shion were carefully watching her, they sensed another lurking danger, not visually, but aurally.

"This is---the Song of Nephilim!"

"Heheheh, now listen to the song! This lovely song of hers!"

"No! You can't let her play this song!"

The two knew the fear of the song too well. Jin and Shion experienced it on Old Miltia fourteen years ago, and the Kukai Foundation half a year ago, respectively. But, Grimoire didn't hesitate to let the song play on.

"---Soon enough, the song will spread all over the U.M.N., and then continue to resound throughout the whole universe. And then, I'll finally be able to summon Nephilim--- my daughter, back to this sanctuary!"

"---Is Nephilim your daughter?"

Shion wasn't the only one who was appalled by Grimoire's statement.

"These aren't---my memories?"

"Heheheh, this Ars Nova is the memories of my lovely daughter! You're going to take over all of these memories, and then I'll use Lemegeton to have you host the spirit of my daughter. You'll be the basis for my hopes!"

"No--- don't, please don't—"

The girl's eyes filled with tears. She wasn't obeying Grimoire to be taken advantage of like this!

"You don't need to be scared. Your wish has now come true."

"No----no, they aren't my memoires---!"

The girl stopped accepting the influx of memories. She started to shut out her own perception altogether to shut out the influx of Nephilim's memories.

"It can't be! Why are you refusing them!? Stop---please. Please accept my daughter!"

As Grimoire flustered, Shion shouted at him.

"Don't you understand? She doesn't want anybody else's memories. All she wanted was her own soul back! Why can't you see that!?"

"She would be able to take over the most precious mind in this world instead of a pseudo mind, and to live as Nephilim. What more could she ask for!?"

"That's just your silly assumptions!"

As Jin was carefully watching the situation, he realized it---that Grimoire referring to the Realian's mind as a pseudo mind had enraged Shion even more.

"Don't pretend like you know what you're talking about! While Vector kept using me I was stuck here for an eternity! All that time I suffered from the pain of losing my daughter!"

Despite Grimoire's grievous cry, the pieces of Nephilim's memories that weren't taken in by the girl started to disperse into the U.M.N.

"Oh no----there goes all my hope---"

Shion's heart was bleeding as she saw the tears running down Grimoire's face. She wasn't going to forgive him for taking advantage of the girl, but now she realized his wishes were coming from his pure affection toward his daughter.

(Nephilim--- how are you taking your father's desperate hope?)

Shion strongly thought to herself. Then, a bell rang as if to respond to her question.

---The moment that Grimoire has been waiting for for thousands of years has finally arrived.

9

Nephilim, the time reconciler, appeared before a man whom she used to call father when she was a human once.

"O-oh----- Nephi---lim?"

Nephilim that both Shion and Jin were familiar with was quietly staring at Grimoire.

"Finally--- You're back. I've been waiting for you--- for all this time---"

As he saw his longstanding wish finally come true, the man's sad tears had become tears of joy. The soul of a man who had lived in the virtual space for thousands of years is finally falling into decay as his wish has been finally fulfilled.

"Welcome home---"

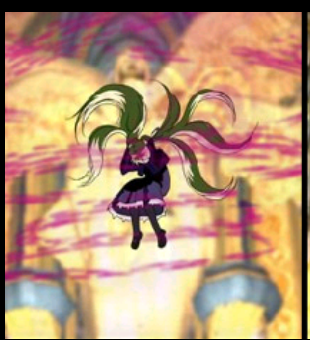
That was the last word that Grimoire left. Nephilim mumbled towards the Encephalon to which her father's soul dispersed.

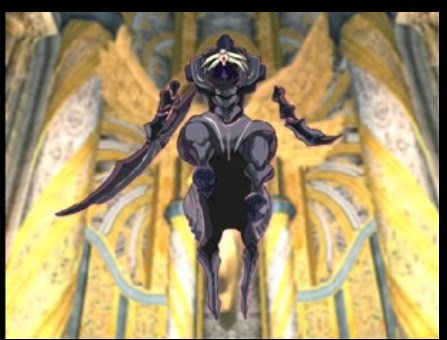
"I was the one who tied you down to this place for all these years---. Your affection for me did this to you---. I'm sorry---."

Nephilim closed her eyes as if to cherish the soul of her lost dad. The tremendous obsession that lasted for thousands of years had finally vanished. But, the series of tragedy stemmed from the obsession hadn't ended yet.

"Noooooooo! ---I don't know anything! I don't know---- Please give me back my name!! My memories---!"

The girl started to transform into a Gnosis. Due to the collective entity of fragments of Lemegeton that were taken into her body--- the ability of Lemegeton, a Gnosis with a human soul was born.





"No! Why are you turning into a Gnosis!?"

Shion's scream didn't reach the girl. Jin drew his sword as he braced himself.

"What are you doing, Jin?!"

"We shouldn't let her continue suffering like this"

"No--- please. I want to talk to her. Jin!"

In spite of Shion's desperate plea, Jin shook his head. If the girl is left alone, the Song of Nephilim will eventually spread all over the U.M.N., and then continue to resound throughout the whole universe. If that really happens, this entire world would be taken over by Gnosis.

"Nooooo!"

"---Shion, step back. I'm with Jin on this one."

The time apart wasn't even that long, but Shion heard a voice that evoked a nostalgia in her nearby.

"KOS-MOS!"

As Jin and Shion turned around, there was KOS-MOS in a brand-new body standing in front of them.

(Why is KOS-MOS here---?)

KOS-MOS's main body should be still on the Dämmerung. Vector must be behind her diving in here from there. Shion's suspicion towards Vector quickly changed to conviction at the very moment. It was heart-wrenching for Jin to see Shion hurt, but he said to KOS-MOS.

"Here I go---Please back me up. Also, I'll leave Shion to you."

Jin went attacking the Gnosis head-on with his sword.

"Hilbert Effect--- unleashed!"

While KOS-MOS's new body received Gnosis's attacks at times, and nullified them at other times, Jin effectively

slashed at the Gnosis between openings created between each attack from the Gnosis.

Due to the series of collaborated attacks from Jin and KOS-MOS, the Gnosis finally fell over. The information constructing the Gnosis started to disperse into the U.M.N. The center of the spreading information was the girl who now appeared obviously drained.

"Oh, no---"

As Shion reflexively turned her eyes away from the sight, Nephilim said to her.

"Shion--- please remember the days you spent with her---"

"Remember?--- me?"

"Yes. You know her real name---"

"I...I know her name?"

Nephilim's words aroused Shion's distant memory---

*

"Al-madel---that's your name?"

"I'm Shion. Are you alone?"

"Don't be scared. I'll be here by you. Everything is going to be okay. If anybody comes here to pick on you, I'd protect you---"

*

"Almadel! Are you okay—Almadel!?"

Memories from fourteen years ago were finally brought back to Shion. It was a distant memory that was forgotten along with the memory of Almadel. The memory of the girl was taken away by Suou Uzuki, Jin and Shion's father.

He was the director of the whole Lemegeton experiment, and due to which the girl was frightened by Jin who resembled Suou. The girl mumbled her own name.

"Alma—del?"

Shion stepped forward next to Jin to talk to the girl---Almadel.

"That's right, Almadel--- that's your real name."

"Shion---"

"It's alright now. There's nothing to be afraid of--- So, you can stop the song now, Almadel."

"How am I--- it doesn't stop--- I can't stop it---!"

Nephilim said to the girl who had been called by her own name.

"Almadel, do you want to save everyone and---Shion?"

"But, I can't. I can't make it stop---!"

"Don't worry. You can make it stop if you want to---. You should be already aware of it. Remember now---"

"Remember---"

There was only one thing to remember for Almadel-- that while Almadel was under a painful experiment in that gloomy room, there was only one girl in there who had caring eyes, and offered a word of comfort to Almadel.

"---Is this? A warm... memory--- inside me. This is---"

"Do you think you can stop singing?"

After a long pause, Almadel answered.

"---Yes. But, will I feel lonely?"

"Well--- I'm sure it will become an everlasting memory for you and the people who know you."

"My memory---Shion---"

"Almadel---"

"Shion--- I didn't know I had a memory of my own. It's a ---it's a present from you."

Right then, Shion realized it. Almadel had made an important decision of her own.

"Almadel, you are---"

"If we see each other again, will you play with me?"

"Don't be silly. Of course, I'll play with you anytime."

"--- Great. I'm looking forward to it."

Tears welled up in Shion's eyes.

"Almadel--- What are you trying to do!?"

"You know--- it's my turn to protect you, Shion."

Her voice had the happiest tone that Shion had ever heard from Almadel.

"Wait, Almadel! I don't want that!"

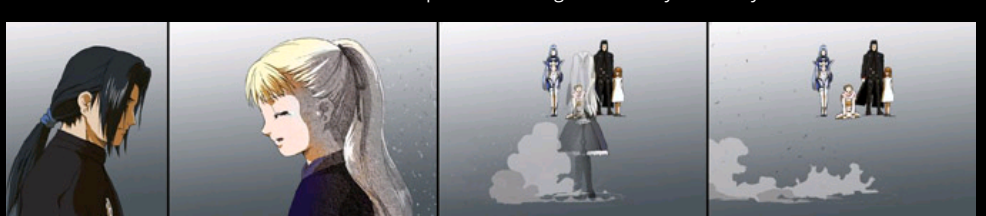
The memory from half a year ago suddenly came back to Shion. Her incompetent self that couldn't help Cecily and Cathe. She didn't want to experience anything like that ever again. She swore to herself that, but---

"---Thank you, Shion."

"No, Almadel. Please--- stop! Jin, stop her!"

"----"

Jin didn't answer. It's more like Jin couldn't answer because he thought he had no right to say anything being the one who had been involved in his father's experiment though it was only indirectly.



"--- It's time for me to say good bye."

With a smile on her face, Almadel turned to a pillar of salt, and crumbled away into the empty sky of the Encephalon--- taking Lemegeton with her. As a result, the song has finally been stopped.

"Alma—del? No, Almadel! You're just fooling around, right!?"

"Why--- does she have to be the one--!?"

"---She refused Lemegeton. To protect us, no—to protect the memory with you---"

Although Shion was able to understand what Jin meant, she couldn't accept it.

"But--- why did it have to be this way---?"

Shion collapsed into tears on the floor. Emptiness was slowly spreading all over her body. The Encephalon started to wave unnaturally nearby.

"This place will be a closed space soon. It'll be an eternal graveyard for Grimoire and Almadel that no one will ever visit---"

KOS-MOS added a few words as if to urge Shion to leave this place.

"Shion, this space has started collapsing. We have to leave quickly now."

But, Shion wasn't going to go along with KOS-MOS's warning. It was more like she didn't have enough energy left. She couldn't save anyone. That thought had shattered Shion's heart.

"It's okay--- I'm kind of tired---"

Jin bent over next to Shion, and gave her a slap on the cheek.

"---Jin?"

"Shion. Do you think Almadel would be happy to see you give up like this?"

"Then, tell me! Why was Almadel born at all!? What was her happiness!?"

"That isn't something that can be determined by another, but only Almadel herself.

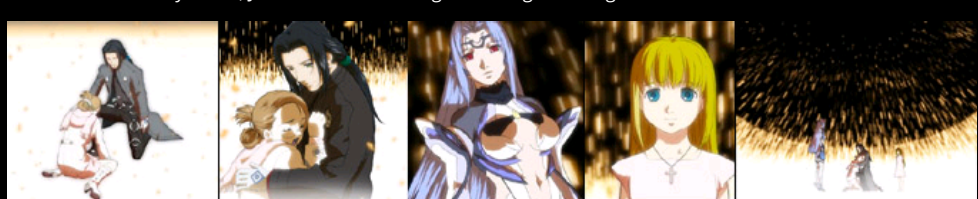
"I don't want to hear it!"

"But--- there's one thing I know for sure. She was able to smile like that because she had met you. That is a fact."

Jin's words seemed to reach Shion, and melted down all the tension bottling up inside her. Her cold tears were now warm tears of relief.

"Jin--- *Cry out*"

As Shion cried her eyes out, Jin sat next to her to give her a gentle hug.



"Let's go home now, Shion."

As Shion nodded, and tried to stand up, KOS-MOS offered her hand to her. Nephilim was quietly watching those three.

Jin sent the signal that he had arranged with Scientia in advance into the present world. Each soul (consciousness) of the three started diving out of Encephalon. After sending them off, Nephilim slowly surveyed the sight of Ars Nova as if to take what happened here, and the souls that were lost forever in this place into her heart for all eternity---.

"Good bye---"

Epilogue

"So--- did your sister decide to resign from Vector?"

"Well, at least on the surface of it. She was held responsible for the incident, and she was practically fired. She seems to have moved on already---"

Jin explained to Juli who had finished reading the final report in the data room of the Contact Subcommittee laboratory. One look at Jin's face is probably enough for anyone to realize Shion wasn't the only one who had moved on.

"I hope she'll have enough rest since she seems to take this incident all on herself."

Jin didn't know that Shion created a connection with Doctus from the Scientia's warship where she was accommodated, and is actively taking advantage of it.

"---Are you worried?"

"No---- well, it's my clumsy little sister after all. I just feel like tending to her more than necessary---"

"Heheh, that's so sweet."

Jin changed the subject almost forcibly.

"I heard that you were also brought responsible for the incident."

"Oh, it's nothing. I was just transferred to the army's experiment facility within the committee. My duty there is to babysit a child, but I must tell you, I'm having a blast."

Jin took a deep bow.

"---I apologize."

"No, don't worry about it. By the way, that resolution is going to be finalized sooner or later. Well, I guess we all knew it was coming after losing our chief engineer.

Jin already heard what that resolution was about from Juli, which Shion wasn't still aware of.

"I see. Shion might get upset when she hears about this---"

"I'm sorry I can't be of any help. In my current position, there was no point in offering a counter argument because they wouldn't just listen to me."

"Dr. Juli Mizrahi, the connection experiment of Abel is about to begin. Please hurry down to the examination room---"

"I'll be right there. ---I'm sorry, I guess I have to go now."

"I'm looking forward to your work, Doctor."

Jin thought to himself as he watched Juli take off.

(Freezing and destroying the KOS-MOS development plan--- I wonder how Shion would react if she knew about this.)

Ordinarily, Jin would worry about her like crazy, but he was assured that there's no need to worry as much. Shion should be able to move forward all by herself now---.

END

Back to Xenosaga